

Tale *Feathers*

November
2006

Volume 73
Number 7

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Don't forget to
Vote Tuesday,
November 7!

and MORE!

Audubon Missouri Hires Executive Director

Dear Friends of Audubon Missouri:

I am delighted to inform you that Audubon Missouri has hired Bruce Carr as its new Executive Director. Bruce will begin his new duties on October 16. Our search for Bruce began last January when Roger Still was promoted to Vice President of Audubon's Mississippi River Programs. During the search period, Roger was handling duties as Interim Executive Director while taking on a new set of responsibilities focusing on Audubon's Mississippi River Programs, and supervising the state programs in his region. Roger will continue to live in Columbia and work out of a new office located near the Audubon Missouri state office.

Before coming to Audubon, Bruce was the Roy Disney Chair of Conservation Education At the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), headquartered in Silver Springs, Maryland, for nine years. Prior to AZA, Bruce was the Director of Education at the Zoo in St. Louis for nine years as well. For six years, prior to his position at the St. Louis Zoo, he was the Assistant Professor of Botany and Microbiology at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, where he taught undergraduate and graduate course in honors Biology, genetics, population biology and evolution.

Bruce is a senior manager with in-depth knowledge of conservation education and science. He has a proven track record in building partnerships, fundraising, brand building and creating effective staff teams. He possesses a great sense of humor and strong work ethic. I am excited about the scope of knowledge and skills he brings to Audubon. I know he is anxious to get started and looks forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,
Charles Burwick
President, Audubon Missouri

St. Louis Audubon Society

Opportunities

and

Announcements

Mission Statement
of
The St. Louis
Audubon Society

Help our community
sustain biological
Diversity through
Nature.

Goals
To foster an aware-
ness and under-
standing
of birds and other
wildlife and their
habitats

To educate our com-
munity so people
can make
informed decisions
about the natural
world.

Mark your calendars! Forest Park Kennedy Woods Annual Honeysuckle Cut

Saturday, November 11

We've had tremendous success in helping to restore the understory in the Kennedy Woods of Forest Park (a designated Important Bird Area) with our annual honeysuckle cut. The date for this year's honeysuckle cut has been set for Saturday, November 11, with a rain date of Saturday, November 18. Note that it's a Saturday this year, instead of Sunday. Come for the morning shift from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. or the afternoon shift from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Bring loppers and gloves; the Round-up and paintbrushes will be provided. We also may do some tree-planting in the p.m. shift, so bring a shovel. Meet at the Kennedy Woods trailhead pavilion in the circle drive off of Wells Drive (west of the zoo hospital) at 9 a.m., and we may caravan to another site for the a.m. shift. The p.m. shift will also meet at the Kennedy Woods trailhead pavilion.

-Susan Gustafson-Forest Park Advisory Group

Beginner Bird Walks

The first two of the St. Louis Audubon Society's beginners birding trips are in the birding schedule in this issue of *Tale Feathers*. We have initiated this program this year for people who are absolute beginners in birding. These trips will be held November 18, 2006 at Busch Conservation area and January 13, 2007 at Riverlands. While the meeting place and time are the same as our regular trips that are scheduled for that day, you may rest assured that the beginners' only group will go their separate way. The leaders for these trips will be experienced birders from our regular corps of leader volunteers. John Solodar will lead the November 18 trip starting at 8:00 AM and Mike Thelen will lead the January 13 trip starting at 9:00 AM.

Holiday Open House Set for Sunday December 3

Details will be announced in the December/January *Tale Feathers*
Also look for details on Christmas Bird Counts

www.stlouisaudubon.org

Birding Trips November, December & January

John Solodar

November 4, Saturday Horseshoe Lake area Paul Bauer will lead this trip to Horseshoe Lake and some surrounding areas. We'll hope to find various ducks, gulls, wintering sparrows and whatever else may be coming through. We'll start at 8:00 AM for this half day trip.

November 18, Saturday Busch/Weldon Spring

This is a dual purpose trip as we are offering a special trip within the trip for beginners. The more experienced part of the group will conduct a regular bird walk with Mike Thelen as the leader. We will offer beginners an opportunity to go out with a different leader, John Solodar, to give these people a trip geared to their needs. Both trips start at 8:00 AM from the Hampton Lake parking lot (see below) and will run until about noon at the latest. If you have to leave early that's OK too.

December 16, Saturday Riverlands Note 9:00 AM start. Mike Thelen will lead this trip. This is the time of the year when a lot of errant migrants make their appearance and Riverlands is a good spot for them. Bring lots of warm clothes as the winter wind can be quite stressful at RMBS. (RMBS is the now abbreviation for Riverlands which is now known as Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary.) We'll be looking for odd gulls, lots of ducks and maybe some surprises such as scoters and, with a lot of luck, jaegers.

January 13, Saturday Riverlands - RMBS is our winter hotspot for interesting birds as it is the time of year when the really rare gulls often show up. With luck we will also have some Longspurs and Snow Buntings around. Again, dress warmly against the winter winds at RMBS. Some of those hunter's charcoal/iron filings hand warmers will also serve you well. Paul Bauer will lead the trip for the experienced birders starting at 9:00 AM. Mike Thelen will lead beginning birders on their own, separate, trip also starting from Teal Pond and at the same time.

How to get there

Busch Conservation Area - Take U.S.40/I-64 west into St. Charles County. Take Hwy 94 south from U.S 40 about 1 mile to the traffic light at Hwy D. Turn right and go about 1.5 miles to the entrance on the right. Turn left at the "T" to Hampton Lake and meet in the parking lot.

Horseshoe Lake - Take I-70 east across Poplar Street ridge. Exit at Highway 111 (exit 6) and turn left. Go north a few miles to the Horseshoe Lake State Park entrance (on left). Meet at the first parking lot on the right.

Riverlands - Take Hwy 367 north from I-270. The designation changes to Hwy 67 just beyond the 4th traffic light, but continue. Turn right on last road just before the Clark Bridge at the Mississippi River. (Fisca gas station at this turn and also a sign for Jones Confluence Park.) Turn right on the first road and park in the Teal Pond parking lot.



CARE Applauds Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus

New Caucus Critical to Halting Refuge System Funding Crisis

For Release: September 14, 2006

Washington – The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE), a diverse coalition of national conservation and recreation organizations, today applauded formation of a Congressional Caucus dedicated to advancing the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and addressing the funding crisis facing the 100-million acre land system. Led by Representatives Ron Kind (D-WI), Jim Saxton (R-NJ), Michael Castle (R-DE) and Mike Thompson (D-CA), the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus Now includes a bi-partisan group of nearly 100 members of the House of Representatives.

The formation of the Caucus comes at a critical time for our nation's National Wildlife Refuge System, haven to countless species of wildlife, as well as unparalleled recreational opportunities for nearly 40 million Americans. With chronic under-funding and a crippling \$3.1 billion budget backlog, the Refuge System, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is unable to adequately manage and restore wildlife habitat, safely maintain facilities and provide quality education and outdoor recreation programs for millions of visitors each year.

"The Refuges System faces a funding crisis of unprecedented proportions and the formation of a Congressional Caucus couldn't come at a better time," said Evan Hirsche, Chair of CARE and president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. "We applaud Representatives Kind, Saxton, Castle, Thompson, and the other members of the Caucus for stepping up to take on the daunting challenge currently faces by the Refuge System."

Budget shortfalls have already resulted in minimal or nonexistent staff at many refuges, harmful impacts to wildlife populations due to the lack of invasive species control, and a reduction in public recreation programs including hunting, fishing and wildlife observation.

The Caucus will work to raise awareness of our Refuge System, support adequate Refuge System budgets, and ensure the sustained growth of the Refuge System for future generations

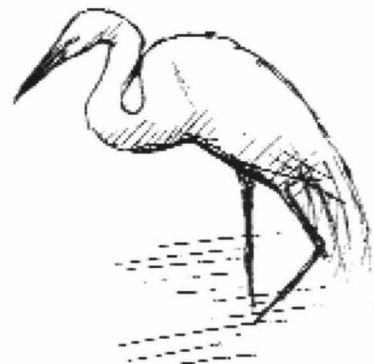
CARE, founded in 1995, is a broad coalition of 21 diverse wildlife, sporting, conservation, and scientific organizations that represent a national constituency numbering more than 5 million. Recognizing the value of a healthy Refuge System to both wildlife and habitats refuges were established to protect, CARE, Highlights the needs of national refuges and works to secure strong investments in these remarkable lands And waters.

For more information:

<http://www.fundrefuges.org/CARE/CareHome.html>

Editor's Note:

The Press Release was sent to St. Louis Audubon from our local Wildlife Refuge managers. Also attached to this news release was the list of Congressmen that are participating in the Wildlife Refuge Caucus. The only member of the Missouri representatives is William Lacy Clay (D-1 District). The Honorable Mr. Clay was recognized in 2005 by the St. Louis Audubon Society as Legislator of the Year.



President's Report
Torrey Berger

This year's field trips are off to a "flying" start with an inaugural outing at Tower Grove Park, where the group observed some interesting if not friendly interaction between two Coopers Hawk and a great horned owl.

By the way, SLAS has delivered a check for \$2,500 to Tower Grove Park to assist in its clean up of trees damaged by the recent storms. We also had an excellent trip to Carlyle Lake, which was made all the more exciting by its attendant thundershowers (all this and drought conditions too?).

Our Education Committee is also in full swing with the start of school and its request for programs. They have a fine group of volunteers, but can always use more, so if you are interested in assisting please get in touch with me or Vice President of Education, Sharon Nickl.

Audubon, Missouri, the state office of the National Audubon Society held its annual meeting for chapter leaders in Cole Camp, Missouri, site of High-Lonesome Prairie IBA project; Audubon and Missouri Department of Conservation will have a shared employee as project director there. The group heard a presentation on Leadership Camps at Hog Island, Maine, the new items on Nationals website for chapters, and a description of the Wildcat Glades Audubon Center, currently under construction in Joplin, Missouri. I also attended the Audubon, Missouri Board of Directors Meeting where we were briefed on the Mississippi River Regional Program of National Audubon, which includes the establishment of the riverboat project to get people on the river at St. Louis. We also had the opportunity to meet Dr. Bruce Carr and act upon his approval as the new Executive Director of Audubon Missouri. His experience and enthusiasm well equip him to keep Audubon moving forward in Missouri.

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!!
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Marsh Bird Survey Aids in Tracking Marsh Bird Populations at B.K. Leach CA.

By
Brian Loges
Wildlife Management Biologist
Missouri Department of Conservation

The second marsh bird survey on B.K. Leach CA was completed this year with significant assistance from the St Louis Audubon Society. 45 separate occurrences of the eight targeted marsh bird species were documented during the survey, up from 32 in 2005. Species observed included: sora rail, king rail, yellow rail, least bittern, American bittern, and pied-billed grebe. The data is submitted to the USGS, Arizona Coop. Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. The data will become part of a national data set that will be used to assess long term trends in marsh bird populations.

The survey was particularly helpful in identifying areas being used by nesting king rails and least bitterns during the early portion of the nesting season. The two conservative marsh birds are known to nest on the area and are good indicators of higher quality marshes with a variety of water depths. The distribution of birds in the early portion of the nesting season influences management decisions concerning drawdowns and vegetation management.

The survey data was also used by students from the University of Arkansas conducting a distribution study of king rails in the Upper Mississippi Valley. Following the completion of the survey in late June, 5 least bitterns and 4 king rail nests were confirmed on the area. Several of the nest were successful, with 3 separate king rail broods confirmed on the area.

Numerous hours were contributed by the 18 volunteers that assisted with the project. The Missouri Department of Conservation is looking forward to conducting another survey in 2007. Three (black rail, common moorhen, and Virginia rail) of the eight target species have yet to be documented through the marsh bird survey, hopefully 2007 will add one or two new target species.

St. Louis Audubon Society
Field Trip Report
Saturday, October 14, 2006

— Two Rivers NWR, Gilbert Lake Division (Jersey County, Illinois) and
Calhoun Division (Calhoun County, Illinois).
— Lincoln Shields Recreation Area and Riverlands
Migratory Bird Sanctuary
(St. Charles County, Missouri).

19 very congenial birders joined today's ST. LOUIS AUDUBON SOCIETY field trip on, what I can call without exaggeration, a spectacular fall day. We enjoyed cool fall temperatures and a glorious, cloudless blue sky. Overall, it was a birdy day — although we didn't see as many sparrows as I had hoped for — and I've attempted to put some numbers to the species we saw and heard. Fall colors seemed to be muted in the early morning light, but were brilliant in the afternoon sun, especially as we crossed the Brussels Ferry on our return trip from Calhoun County to Jersey County.

Some birds, including several raptors, got away unidentified because they were just too high, too far away, or had dived into the vegetation and lost themselves. Mike Grant and Dave Faintich photographed some of the birds today and promised to share their good ones. At 4:30 p.m. the group was at Lock & Dam 26 on the Mississippi River, tired but happy, so we didn't make it to Confluence State Park. By my count, 82 species for the day.

GILBERT LAKE DIVISION

We met here and spent a little extra time birding the area because there was plenty to see. We began in the parking lot just listening to the birds around us and tallied 15 species quickly. A YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was a nice surprise, and hopped from tree to tree right next to the lot for good looks. Before we left the parking lot we spotted an OSPREY, perched on a snag next to the Illinois River.

Along the trail we had BELTED KINGFISHER, ORANGE-CROWNED and BLACK-THROATED

GREEN Warblers, and a real nice look at a handsome BLUE-HEADED VIREO. We also saw both kinglets, and a few had a look at a distant, perched SHARP-SHINNED HAWK. BLUE Jays and NORTHERN Flickers were numerous and active and we spotted one EASTERN PHOEBE. Farther up the slough there were a small number of ducks and shorebirds, including yellowlegs and unidentified peeps. We attempted to approach for viewing, but the distance and vegetation was a little too much and we retreated.

CALHOUN DIVISION

The staff and volunteers at Two Rivers NWR were hosting the refuge open house and extended their hospitality to the Audubon birders. I'd like to offer our sincere thanks to all who made this visit special.

As we approached our first stop we spotted a good-sized flock of FRANKLIN'S Gulls, in a variety of plumages, resting on the Illinois River. We checked in with the open house volunteers and birded the area around the floodgate, seeing a few wading birds, swallows and shorebirds.

But the highlight here was the opportunity to bird along the north levee of Swan Lake, officially closed for construction. Ken, USF&WS biologist, was so kind as to shuttle our group in his van out two miles along the levee to the watch post, manned by Frank and Dan of the GREAT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY. It was quite a thrill, as there were upwards of 10,000 birds on the lake, mostly a mix of ducks, coots, pelicans and some shorebirds.

The highlights at the watch post included 4 AMERICAN Avocets and 2 PEREGRINE Falcons. At one point the falcons were socializing in an aerial ballet. One bird was working the distant shoreline, stirring up the ducks and shorebirds, and we watched it take a duck, then struggle in flight to get its prey to dry land. The duck was still alive and struggling up until the hawk landed.

There were some shorebirds here, and although a little distant we saw both yellowlegs and dowitchers (surely LONG-BILLED DOWITCHERS). We heard

a report of Hudsonian Godwit, seen by volunteers from the "pump house road" overlook, and filed that away for later.

From the levee we headed to the refuge HQ and had a pleasant lunch on the deck, visiting with the staff and enjoying the turtle display, courtesy of the Illinois Natural History Survey. There were softshells, eastern and western box turtles and others, plus a tub of precious baby red-eareds and snapping turtles. Hundreds of swallows hunted over the tree line to the northeast. A few sparrows moved in and out of the vegetation below the deck, including WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS.

After lunch we made a brief stop at the lookout point on the "pumphouse" road. There were a few PIED-BILLED GREBES in the water along the road, but at the point the birds on the lake were too far away and the heat distortion too much. We did not see any godwits, but saw an immature BALD EAGLE and an unidentified, high altitude hawk. I found it while looking up at the swallows and the bird glided through my field of view. About all I can say is that the bird was shaped like an accipiter (broad, rounded wings and long, narrow tail); the underside of the wing and body was barred/striped and orangey; the underside of the tail looked half white (near the body) and half black. It was all rather strange, but the hawk was very high and I assume the light was playing bad tricks.

LINCOLN SHIELDS & RIVERLANDS

There weren't a lot of birds on the Mississippi River at Lincoln Shields, but we did find 2 HERRING Gulls, perched alongside RING-BILLED Gulls on a log in the river.

We stopped at Heron Pond to look for the recently-reported Ibis, but didn't see it. There wasn't much water in the pond, although the flood-control gate was open and water was pouring in. Also, today was the last opportunity to walk the Heron Pond trail as it will be closed beginning October 15 for the benefit of the birds. We walked the trail down to the pond, and SORAs responded to my humble rail imitation (as they did one week ago).

There was a nice mix of ducks in Ellis Bay, including GADWALL, AMERICANWIGEON, NORTHERN SHOVELER, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, REDHEAD, RING-NECKED DUCK and RUDDY DUCK, plus a large number of AMERICAN COOTS, roughly 1,000. A few BONAPARTE'S Gulls were flying near the tip of Ellis Island and there was a nice little group of HORNED Grebes, more AMERICAN WHITE Pelicans, and DOUBLE-CRESTED Cormorants..

Mike Thelen

Tale Feathers

Tale Feathers is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 2,200 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Mary Dueren edits the newsletter. To contact the editor, call evenings to 314-576-1473 or email: mdueren@charter.net.

St. Louis Audubon Society 2006 - 2007

St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
Kirkwood, MO 63122
Phone: 314-822-6595

Officers

President -Torrey Berger	314-579-9227
VP Education - Sharon Nickl	636-391-8751
VP Conservation - Linda Tossing	314-849-4260
VP Finance - John Solodar	314-862-5294
Treasurer - David Rogles	636-936-0660
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Board members

Lynne Breakstone	314-726-4772
David Bruns	314-968-2091
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Cathy Devine	314-962-3460
Mary Dueren	314-576-1473
Ann Earley	314-799-3961
Susan Gustafson	314-968-8128
Ted Heisel	314-401-6218
Anne Rankin Horton	636-256-3402
Dency Kahn	dkahn@stlcc.edu
Julie Leeman	636-861-1490
Mitch Leachman	314-739-5112
Pat Lueders	314-961-6614
Joel Porath	636-527-0175
Mary Smidt	636-227-6127
Mike Thelen	314-862-6642
Jim Wilson	314-534-9975

St. Louis Audubon Society

P.O. Box 220227

St. Louis, Mo. 63122

Ph: 314.822.6595

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Your membership dues will go directly to the St. Louis Audubon Society. Your membership dues support local issues that are important to you, programs at our general meetings, and *Tale Feathers*, our newsletter.

Dues are \$15.00 per year and cover all members living at the same address.

Please complete the form, enclose a check payable to SLAS, and mail to:

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